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ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS FOR READING IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS: A GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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Abstract: One significant difference characterizing the 2013 Curriculum from the former ones is the use of alternative assessment to measure the students' expected learning outcomes. The old-fashioned modes of assessments, such as multiple choice exams, or completion exams are regarded insufficient to capture the language skills of the students. Students' demonstration of the mastery of various domains of learning objectives has not necessarily equated with a demonstration of their capacities in real-world settings. Ideally, what is tested should mirror what really is required outside the classroom. So far, reading mastery is always tested through traditional mode of assessment like multiple choice (MC). The new curriculum recommends a different perspective of assessment which is called alternative assessment. However, the shift from the traditional assessments to alternative assessments seems to acquire some constraints on the parts of the teachers. Many teachers are not familiar with the new concepts and practices within the emerging paradigm. It is due to the absence of a clear guideline for doing such assessments. The goal of this paper is to propose a theoretically grounded method to conduct alternative assessments which are developed from a pair of competence standards listed in the English syllabus for Senior High Schools.

Key words: alternative assessment, reading, English learning

Abstrak: Salah satu yang membedakan kurikulum 2013 dengan kurikulum sebelumnya adalah adanya penggunaan penilaian

otentik untuk mengukur hasil belajar siswa. Jenis penilaian lama seperti tes pilihan ganda, atau tes melengkapi dianggap kurang mampu menunjukkan kemampuan berbahasa siswa yang sesungguhnya. Kemampuan siswa dalam menunjukkan kemampuan belajar berbahasanya tidak sama dengan apa yang terjadi dalam dunia nyata. Idealnya, apa yang diuji harus mencerminkan apa yang sebenarnya diperlukan di luar kelas. Sejauh ini, kemampuan membaca selalu diuji melalui jenis penilaian lama/tradisional seperti pilihan ganda (MC). Sekarang ini kurikulum baru merekomendasikan perspektif yang berbeda dari penilaian yang disebut penilaian alternatif. Namun, pergeseran dari penilaian tradisional untuk penilaian otentik/alternatif tampaknya memunculkan beberapa kendala pada bagian-bagian dari guru. Banyak guru yang tidak cukup paham dengan konsep dan praktek nyata dari penilaian otentik/alternatif. Hal ini terjadi karena tidak adanya pedoman yang jelas untuk melakukan penilaian tersebut. Tujuan dari makalah ini adalah untuk mengusulkan landasan teoritis terkait dengan penilaian alternatif yang didasarkan pada standar kompetensi yang tercantum dalam silabus Bahasa Inggris untuk Sekolah Menengah Atas.

Kata kunci: penilaian alternatif, membaca, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has released a new curriculum, the 2013 Curriculum, which is directed to achieve more holistic learning outcomes in that of knowledge, skills and attitude toward the value of the education process in schooling. The previous curriculum was reported to have focused only on the knowledge attainment. The current global challenge, facing the Asean Economic Community, for example, requires competencies which comprise a balance between soft and hard skills, covering knowledge, skills and attitudes. Life-long skills of creative thinking, problem solving, summarizing, synthesizing, and reflecting are needed in order to compete among other nations in the near future. This becomes a strong reason for the government introduces the new curriculum, despite the fact that teachers are still confused in the implementation (Helena, 2014).

The new curriculum is characterized by its holistic perspective on learners, i.e. each individual learner as a whole person, by providing assistance to every individual to develop his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes (Hamid, 2014). The curriculum shift has indeed brought about some changes, ranging from the competences, learning materials, teaching approach and methods, and assessments. In regard to the assessments, there is a shift from traditional testing techniques to alternative assessments. Traditional tests, such as multiple-choice, fill-in-the-gaps, matching, etc., can not capture complex learning outcomes. The need to utilize assessment instruments beyond paper-and-pen tests is also supported by Genesee and Hamayan (1994) who state:

...tests can be useful for collecting information about student achievement under certain restricted conditions, but they are not particularly useful for collecting information about students' attitudes, motivation, interests, and learning strategies (p.229)

At the newly released 2013 Curriculum, there exists the term of alternative assessments which has quickly becomes more popular among educators. At the moment, the term has long been coined in education research and development (see Hancock, 1990, Herman, J.L and Arschbacter and Winters, 1992). Though there is no single definition on what alternative assessment really is, there are some other names which usually refer the same type such as alternative assessment, continuous assessments, direct assessment, and dynamic assessments (Tsagari, 2004). However, it is simply agreed that alternative assessment is another form of assessments, meaning that it becomes alternative to the existing assessments (traditional assessments) that offer different strategies. This paper is intended to give teachers clear examples of doing alternative assessments in English class, particularly when reading becomes the highlight priority of teaching English as a foreign language like in Indonesia. English teachers in some schools that implement the 2013 curriculum find difficulties in doing the alternative assessment due to the absence of simple guidelines for carrying out the alternative assessments in the classroom.

OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

As mentioned earlier, the shift from traditional assessments to alternative assessments is due to the difference of competencies of the present curriculum and that of the previous one. The traditional tests can no

longer be appropriate to clarify all the skills required by the new curriculum. Barootchi&Keshvarz in Tsagari (2004) acknowledge the need for alternative assessment because the rich, descriptive information about learning result and, more importantly, about the learning process of learning and the ongoing measurement of student growth needed for formative evaluation and for planning instructional strategies cannot be gathered by conventional testing methods. This is not to say that conventional tests are to be grounded. Conventional tests which are product-oriented are not to be excluded from the classroom because they are still needed as useful tools to measure the knowledge of attainment. However, they are to be supplemented by some other types of assessments which are called alternative assessments.

Alternative assessment is a blanket term that covers any number of alternatives to standardized tests. While the traditional paper-and-pencil tests may be effective to assess some of the skills (such as listening and reading), they are not sufficient to assess the productive skills of speaking and writing. The nature of proficiency-oriented language learning calls for a variety of assessment options reflecting the numerous instructional strategies used in the classroom.

There are some definitions of alternative assessments. Among others is from Hamayan (1995) who sees alternative assessment as “procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom” (p. 213). According to him alternative assessment is a part of the regular instruction the teacher can do in the sense that it does not require specific settings in the classroom.

Another definition of alternative assessment comes from Alderson and Banerjee (2001) who state the following:

Alternative assessment’ is usually taken to mean assessment procedures which are less formal than traditional testing, which are gathered over a period of time rather than being taken at one point in time, which are usually formative rather than summative in function, are often low-stakes in terms of consequences, and are claimed to have beneficial washback effects (p. 228).

Based on the above citation, alternative assessment is a non standardized type of assessments which is focused on the process rather than product of learning. With alternative assessment, products and processes are equally valued. This is in line with the latest curriculum which suggests that

assessment be given at the whole process of learning, not only at the end of the term. It is used to monitor the students' progress rather than students' achievement. Borrowing Marshall's terminology (2007), alternative assessment is assessment for learning while conventional assessment is assessment of learning.

A similar opinion is given by Hancock (1994) who says that alternative assessment is an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the student's progress in language using non-conventional strategies. Meanwhile, Kohonen (1997) makes the point that alternative assessment,

...emphasises the communicative meaningfulness of evaluation and the commitment to measure that which we value in education. It uses such forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities... Its results can be used to improve instruction, based on the knowledge of learner progress (p. 13).

A more detailed elaboration of alternative assessment is given by Aschbacher (1991) who enumerates some common characteristics of alternative assessments. He points out that alternative assessments:

1. require problem solving and higher level thinking;
2. involve tasks that are worthwhile as instructional activities;
3. focus on processes as well as products;
4. encourage public disclosure of standards and criteria; and
5. use real-world contexts or simulations.

A somewhat different set of characteristics were further proposed by Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters (1992, p.6), who state that alternative assessments:

1. require students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
2. tap into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills;
3. approximate real-world applications;
4. use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
5. ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment; and call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

Considering all the benefits of alternative assessment, it is on the right track when the 2013 curriculum recommends the use of alternative assessments rather than the traditional ones. The problem might be that conducting alternative assessment needs extra time from the teacher as has been admitted by Seaman (2005) that alternative assessment is time-consuming in foreign language program. Further, he reminds teachers not to adopt too many forms of alternative assessments at once. Teachers can find the best mix for each particular situation.

ASSESSMENTS ON READING

Reading skill is one of the four skills that should be mastered by the students. Among the other skills, in Indonesian context, reading has been emphasized to be acquired by the learners for at least two reasons. First, reading skill is regarded important since its level of literacy is usually measured. In some international assessments like PISA, TIMSS and PIRLLS reading becomes the dominant part of the tests. Even, people's literacy level is commonly indicated by their reading ability. Secondly, within only three to four periods a week in Senior High School for example, it is not sufficient to attain all the language skills in the classroom. The logical choice is to highlight one or two skills to be focused in learning, and reading becomes the most visible one with the assumption that senior high school graduates will be studying higher education where English is a prerequisite to read textbooks in universities are commonly written in English.

Unluckily, traditional assessments like multiple choice and short answer are mostly used as modes of assessment in reading. These assessments are unable to serve to provide adequate assessment of the students' reading skill. In multiple choice, for example, students cannot demonstrate what they have understood what they have read because they are to pick from one of four or five choices. What language skill do students perform when they are required to recognize a correct answer?

Multiple choice tests can not capture what the students are able to do in terms of language use. Basically, there are some samples of competencies the students can perform dealing with reading skills. These competencies should be measured with alternative assessments in regards to reading. Some alternative assessments existing in reading are writing sample, retelling, reader's response journals, dialog journal, graphic organizer, content area log,

and many others. The rest of this guideline will cover the example or the prototype of using alternative assessment in reading activities.

Any assessment must refer to the required competences listed in the syllabus. In the present curriculum of SMA, the required competences of the learning outcomes are formulated in terms of *Kompetensi Inti* (core competence) and *Kompetensi Dasar* (basic competence). However, there is no clear-cut distinction of the language skills in the syllabus. The students learning outcomes are subdivided into four domains: spiritual attitudes, social attitudes, knowledge and skills. In English curriculums for Senior High Schools, such a division has caused confusion among teachers and practitioners in that the formulation of competencies does not correspond to the existing framework (Helena, 2014).

In the syllabus, reading and listening are categorized into “knowledge competence” while speaking and writing are “skills competence”. This, of course, contradicts the terms of “language competence” and “language skills” in English Language Learning literature. However, in this paper we will not problematize the different angle of seeing the competence-skills relation because the curriculum has been stipulated by the government. What we can do is just to evaluate reading, either as knowledge or as a skill by using assessment types other than standardized tests.

FORMS OF ASSESSMENTS

The first step to take when constructing a test, according to Brown (2004), is taking a careful look at everything that we think our students should “know” or be able to “do”. In other words, we have to look at the objectives of tests. This can be done by analysing the standard competences listed in the curriculum. Based on the the present curriculum, the objectives of the test must correspond to the formulation of the basic competences.

For our purpose of providing an example of doing alternative assessment, we will use a pair of the basic competences in English Class for Grade 10 of Senior High School. The “pairness” here refers to the the knowledge-skills relation where competence coded 3 is knowledge and that coded 4 refers to skills.

The basic competence below is taken from English syllabus Grade 10 for senior high schools from which the three proposed forms of alternative assessment will be made.

Table 1:
Formulation of Basic Competence

3.10 Analyzing the social function, text structure, and language features of simple narrative text of legends, according to the contexts of usage. (Knowledge)
4.10 Responding to simple spoken and written narrative texts in the form of simple legends. (Skills)

(English Syllabus for Grade 10)

Based on basic competences above, it can be seen that there are two learning outcomes the students have to achieve which consist of knowledge and skill. However, for teachers, it is not easy to interpret the meaning of the phrase “responding to spoken and written narrative texts”. Most teachers are still confused when faced with how to respond this context, belongs to a skill. The problem arises on how to measure “responding” since there is little explanation on the types of assessment in the syllabus. To meet that purpose, the authors of these guidelines offer three assessment methods which are supposed to match the needs for measuring the required competences exemplified above.

The followings are three of seven alternative assessments to teach reading (including the steps to apply and the scoring rubric):

A. Writing Sample

There is a close relation between reading and writing. Calfee and Miller (2005) even claim if writing assessments can measure two distinct, highly related, abilities: (1) reading comprehension and (2) transforming comprehension into composition. The first ability is commonly measured with conventional tests such as multiple choice and short answer types. The second ability requires productive use of language, and it seems to be best measured with alternative assessments.

In this example, reading skill is measured through writing tasks. Writing sample is an example of assessment which emphasizes reading skill. In this test, students focus on rearranging the text they have read. Then the students can use their own creativity to paraphrase the given text. The result of applying this assessment will be successful if the students have a new text which is different from each other. In this case, there is no copying from

others'. This form of assessment is best applied for narrative texts. Here are the steps in applying writing sample assessment (*For Narrative text*):

1. Students read a narrative text comprehensively.
2. Students outline the text with the following format:

Outline of ... (the title of the story)	
a. Orientation	
	In what paragraph...
	Time
	Place
	Characters
b. Evaluation	
	In what paragraph... (then, tell the evaluation in a complete sentence)
c. Complication	
	In what paragraph... (then, tell the complication in a complete sentence)
d. Resolution	
	In what paragraph... (then, tell the resolution in a complete sentence—more than one sentence is possible)
e. Re-orientation	
	If there is any, in what paragraph... (then, tell the re-orientation in a complete sentence)

3. Students summarize the text by using their own words.

The students are required to make a summary of the story by using their own words. In order to score the students writing, a clear and operational rubric is needed.

The following is an example of writing sample rubric the teacher can use.

Tabel 2:
Scoring Rubric for Writing Sampel

4 (Excellent)	3 (Good)	2 (Average)	1 (Needs Improving)
The written response is complete. It indicates a very good understanding of the story and its problem, and provides accurate, relevant details, information, and supportive reasoning.	The response is partial and indicates a fairly good understanding of the story. Although the information selected includes mostly accurate details and ideas, some may be irrelevant or unrelated to the story's problem.	The response is fragmentary and indicates only minimal understanding of the story's problem. It includes mainly random details and irrelevant information.	There is little or no response. Inaccurate and irrelevant details and ideas indicate a serious misunderstanding of the story.

B. Retelling

Retelling is responding to text that is based on post-reading or post-listening in which the reader recalls a story in order to understand it more fully. Retelling is the ability to read or listen to a story, then summarize it in paraphrased forms. Unlike answering specific questions after reading, retelling requires reprocessing large segments of text, thinking about the sequence of ideas/events and their importance. Thus, retelling is a powerful technique for checking the students' understanding and is a proper strategy to teach reading comprehension. In retelling, students build on their knowledge of retelling to recall information. Learning to retell a story thoughtfully is critical to learning to write a story and to build comprehension. The retelling strategy can come in the form of oral presentation or a written form. The main construct of retelling is:

1. To repeat what has been comprehended
2. To reconstruct or paraphrase a story
3. To organize (sequence of ideas/events) text information in order to provide a personal interpretation of it.

The followings are some advantages of implementing retelling for both teacher and students:

For students:

1. Encourages readers to focus on the meaning of the text
2. Reinforces elements of the story like characters, story structure, setting, and plot.
3. Enhances communication and oral language development.
4. Help students to focus on their understanding of what they read, see, or hear and challenge them to communicate what they have learned to others.
5. Provides an opportunity to share what has been read.
6. Provides practice in reviewing the story or body of information and retelling it in a sequence

For teachers:

1. Demonstrates what the student understands and remembers about the story.
2. Indicates what the student knows about the story's structure and literal language.
3. Portrays the student's vocabulary and oral or written language development.
4. Determines the degree of understanding a student had of a text.

This assessment is best applied for narrative texts. The followings are some steps of implementing retelling technique :

1. Students read a selected narrative text in a given time.
The better way to have students read is by providing various texts or stories at one occasion. This will make the class not monotonous because students read different stories. In addition, this will avoid students cheating from the others.
2. Students retell the text.

Retelling the story can be done in spoken or written form. However, to avoid repeating activity as what happens in writing sample, the retelling is done in spoken form.

The following are the points to consider when retelling is done in spoken mode.

1. The students use their own words
2. They order the events sequentially from beginning to the end
3. They write setting details in the retell (when setting is clear in the story)
4. The students can name the characters' characterization
5. They can name character feelings in every event taking place in the story (for instance: how the characters feel while facing and resolving the problem in the story)
6. They name why the characters do the things they do in the story.

To evaluate the students' retelling the following rubric can be applied:

Tabel 3:
Scoring rubric for retelling technique

4	3	2	1
names big events <u>or</u> orders the retell by meaning <u>or</u> summarizes the gist of the story	names big events <u>or</u> orders the retell by meaning <u>or</u> summarizes the gist of the story	has a few of the big events, but only a partial recounting of them <u>or</u> may retell only the beginning or ending of the story.	clear misunderstanding of text <u>or</u> retells only an isolated portion of the text (talks only one or two sentences from the story. <u>or</u> makes up a story <u>or</u> repeat what the teacher said in the text introduction
names character feelings names why the characters do the thing they do in the story	names character feelings names why the characters do the thing they do in the story	does not talk about character feelings	
Uses setting details in the retell (when setting is clear in the story)			

C. Reader's Response Journal

A readers' response journal, also well-known as a reading response journal, according to Fountas & Pinnell (2001), is a place that students can write about their reading. The journal allows students to record their thoughts so that they can review and reflect on them. Another definition describes it as a journal where students respond to any reading by writing summaries of what they have read or personal reactions to what they have read (Manning, 1999). This implies that reading response journals are considered proper for teaching both reading and writing. Manning (1999) goes on to explain that the purpose for such a journal offers the teacher a way to see the amount of meaning of a text that the reader has constructed. It has also been stated that the purpose for a reader's journal is to write about, and respond to, reading the information given (Rief, 2003). This assessment is best applied for narrative texts and analytical exposition texts. Below are the steps for implementing reader's response journals:

1. First, a few days or a week prior to the classroom meeting, students are assigned to read some suggested stories or books. It will be better if the teacher provides a list of titles to be read within the whole semester or term. Various titles and language levels will be most needed since students have different interest as well as language competence. Graded assessments are better applied at this activity.
2. While reading, the students are asked to answer the following guiding questions:

Table 4:
Suggested Guiding Questions

For narrative text	For analytical exposition texts
1. How did the reading make you feel? Why?	1. How did the reading make you feel? Why?
2. Do you like the story? Give your reasons!	2. Where is the writer's position? Does the writer agree with the topic?
3. Which part of the story do you like? Write it down!	3. Where is your position? Do you agree with the topic exposed by the writer? Or do you disagree?
4. Write about something that surprised you or that you found interesting!	4. What arguments are exposed by

<p>5. Describe the setting – when and where the story takes place.</p> <p>6. Who is your favorite character? Give an example from the story to tell why.</p> <p>7. If you were a character in this book, who would you be? Why?</p> <p>8. Describe the similarities and differences between the main character and you!</p> <p>9. Describe the major conflict. What side are you on?</p> <p>10. Would you recommend the text to another reader?</p> <p>11. Write about an important lesson that can be learned in the story.</p> <p>12. List some new words you found in the text.</p> <p>13. List three questions you have about what you read.</p> <p>14. What are some things you don't understand in what you're reading?</p> <p>15. If you could change what you're reading, how would you change it?</p> <p>16. Pretend you get to create the music soundtrack for what you've been reading. What five songs would you include? Write an explanation for each song: why would you include it, how does the song connect to events.</p>	<p>the writer?</p> <p>5. Write about something that surprised you or that you found interesting!</p> <p>6. Would you recommend the text to another reader?</p> <p>7. What are some things you don't understand in what you're reading?</p> <p>8. List some new words you found in the text.</p> <p>9. List three questions you have about what you read.</p>
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3. The works are submitted to the teacher.
4. After being evaluated by the teacher, the works are then given back to the students. The teacher points out 10 works to be exposed in the wall magazine (each class is supposed to have their own wall magazine), while the other students should save their works. This is

done for several times so that each student has their own journal containing their own works. To evaluate the students' journal, the rubric below can be used.

Table 5:
Quality of Writing Rubric

	Outstanding 4	Proficient 3	Progressing 2	Emerging 1
Quality of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You always attempt deeper thinking in your responses -You make connectiond, ask questions, make inferences, synthesize about the text -you do not simply summarize the story -you provide good examples to explain your thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You usually attempt deeper thinking in your responses -You make connections, ask questions, draw conclusions, make inferences about the text in some of your entries. -You do some summarizing -You provide some examples to explain your thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sometimes you attempt deeper thinking in your responses -You summarize the story -You write simple ideas that show only surface understanding of the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Your notebook has minimal responses and those present show only basic understanding of the story -You do not sustain books or reading long enough to show comprehension strategies.
Quality of entries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You always write in your notebook everyday that is assigned. -You log your reading everyday. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You usually write your notebook on assigned days. -You usually log your reading daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You often write in your notebook at school -Your log only some of your reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You seldom write in your notebook. -You log little or no reading in your log

Neatness of entries	-Your notebook looks like you truly treasure your ideas and thought about reading. -Others can easily read your entries	-Your notebook and entries are usually neat, clean and carefully written -Others can usually read your entries	-Some of the entries in your notebook are neat and carefully written It's difficult for others to read your entries	-You paid little attention to details or neatness -It is very difficult or impossible to read your entries
Book choice	-You write the book titles on your entries	-You mostly write the book titles on your entries -You mostly choose to read JRB	-You sometimes write the book titles on your entries You have been reading similar books -You don't always choose to read JRB	-You read the same of the book -You choose books that are not just right for you
Reading focus	You read 100% of the time	You read 90-99% of the time	-You read 80-89% of the time	-You read less than 80% of the time

http://shorette2015-2016.blogspot.co.id/2015_09_01_archive.html

CONCLUSION

Assessment is an essential part of the learning process that calls for serious attention from the teachers and practitioners. Whatever good the curriculum had been designed with in mind, it will be nothing when there is no valid and reliable assessments as tools for evidence measure of success of curriculum implementation.

The alternative assessments as proposed in this paper, is seen to embody a different concept of assessment which theoretically beneficial to be applied in the reading class. However, further empirical work needs to be done to examine alternative assessment practices in the real situations. For example, we need to compare the similar learning outcomes measured with two different testing types, alternative assessment and standardised testing. We need to know how the aspects of alternative assessment are actually accomplished in the classroom, how the students perception on the use of

alternative assessment, and how these kinds of assessment improve the learning achievement.

The call for increased use of alternative assessments means that language teachers will have a wider range of evidence to judge whether students are becoming competent, purposeful language users. It also means that language programs will become more responsive to the differing learning styles of students and value diversity there in. Finally, language programs that focus on alternative assessment are likely to instill in students' lifelong skills related to critical thinking that build a basis for future learning, and enable them to evaluate what they learn both in and outside of the language class.

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